Our prayers are with you.

## THE HOWRIGAN FAMILY OF FAIRFIELD, VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the Howrigan family of Fairfield, VT, who recently celebrated their annual family reunion.

The Howrigan family is a bedrock of Franklin County and Vermont agriculture, and has done much to carry on our State's agricultural stewardship tradition.

I have known many members of the Howrigan family for years and have come to appreciate the sound counsel on dairy issues and other aspects of farm policy.

Mr. President, I thank the Howrigan family for their service to Vermont agriculture and their communities, for they represent the finest tradition of our rural State.

I ask unanimous consent that a July 24, 2005, Burlington Free Press article featuring and honoring this wonderful Vermont family be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, July 24, 2005]

### HOWRIGANS: A DYNASTY OF DAIRYING

(By Candace Page)

FAIRFIELD.—When Harold Howrigan's four grandsons crammed into the back seat of their aunt's pickup truck for a road trip last week, Tim Howrigan, 12, couldn't wait to tell the others what he'd heard about a breakthrough in mastitis research.

''The cows that get the new treatment, their calves produce more enzymes'' to prevent the udder infection in dairy cows, he told them. He explained to his 10- and 11-year-old cousins how it's better to keep cows healthy than to have to cure them after they've become sick.

In the Howrigan clan, you are never too young to learn the family business.

''It's in the blood,'' says W. Robert Howrigan, 86.

Howrigans have been milking cows in Fairfield since their arrival from Ireland's County Tipperary in 1849. One Howrigan, William, and his wife, Margaret, reared 10 children on a 35-cow hill farm in the Depression days. Today, 32 of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren work farms in Franklin County—a dairy dynasty unique in Vermont.

The descendants of William and Margaret milk more than 3,000 cows and produce maple syrup from nearly 40,000 taps; their fields, pastures and woods cover 10,000 acres in Fairfield and neighboring towns.

More farms—38 of them—ship milk from Fairfield than from any other Vermont town, in part because of the community's high Howrigan count. The family has provided two of Vermont's most influential voices in state and national dairy policy: William's sons, the late state Sen. Francis Howrigan and Harold, 81, a longtime leader of the St. Albans Co-operative Creamery.

Howrigans have graduated from Harvard; become nurses, doctors, teachers and lawyers; left Fairfield or Vermont for good. But an extraordinary number of the men, and some of the women, have chosen a farm life like their parents'.

They constitute a one-clan countertrend to Vermont's annual loss of family farms in the face of low milk prices, the flight of young people and the attraction of less back-breaking work.

''Saddam Hussein couldn't drive these people off their farms,'' Vermont Agriculture Secretary Steve Kerr says, ''They love farming. You can see that in their faces. And it's not just that they love what they do; they are making money at it.''

The sprawling but tight-knit family network has proven fertile ground for growing both success and love of the farming life. Dozens of pairs of Howrigan hands will materialize to help build an uncle's barn, move a cousin's herd or teach the finer points of farming to a sister's child.

Kerr could not think of another Vermont farm clan as big and long-lasting as the Howrigans. ''I don't see why what they've got isn't sustainable forever and ever,'' he said.

Twelve-year-old Tim Howrigan, for one, knows just what he'll do when he grows up: ''I'll be a cow farmer,'' he said.

#### A FARM EDUCATION

Margaret McCarthy Howrigan bore a child every 18 to 24 months between 1915 and 1933. She made sure 10 children were fed, clothed and washed in a house not reached by electric lines until 1939.

A teacher before her marriage to William, she put as high a value on education as her husband put on improving his farmland and tiny herd. Margaret's children would go to high school. Her girls, all five of them, would go to college if they wanted and every one of them did.

William's boys were a different case. Yes, they were needed as workers on the farm, but in the Howigran family, farming meant more than the endless repetition of milking cows and cutting hay. A farm was for problem-solving today and improving for tomorrow.

As children, the Howrigans helped their father transplant lines of maples along Howrigan Road, build drainage on the roads in their sugarbush to prevent erosion, and turn the piles of stone hauled from their fields into the foundation of an all-weather road.

Decades later, Francis, the oldest boy, would put this lesson into words his children still repeat: ''Live as though you're going to die tomorrow, farm as though you're going to live forever.''

He and his brothers found challenges for the brain and plenty of stimulation for their entrepreneurial instincts right on the farm. They grew up in a narrow, hill-edged valley but didn't see the farm as confining or constraining.

At 17 or 18, Harold built what he thinks was the first mechanical gutter cleaner in Vermont, on assemblage of chains and pulleys and a 5-horsepower motor to haul manure out of the barn.

''I just got tired of shoveling,'' he said last week.

In his teens, Francis acquired a drag saw to cut firewood for neighbors. He bought a truck and began hauling milk and hay for other farmers. In his 20s, he rented a nearby place ''on halves'' from a neighboring farmer, paying half the expenses and taxes, keeping half the income. By 32, he owned his first farm. Ultimately, he would accumulate 10 farms and more than 4,000 acres.

When Robert, Francis' younger brother, couldn't persuade his father to buy the farm next-door, he borrowed the money to buy it himself. He, too, would acquire additional farms—five in all—to pass on to his sons.

Even Tom, who did go to college in his 30s and became a surgeon, continues to live in the house where he was born. At 84, he still spends many of his days cutting brush and improving the family woodlot. ''I consider myself a longtime surgeon but a lifetime farmer,'' he said.

Some Howrigan sons still prefer to get their education on the farm. The family tells the story of Michael Howrigan, Francis' grandson, who enrolled in college after high school.

''He called home every night. He wasn't homesick. He just couldn't stand not knowing what was happening on the farm,'' said his father, also named Michael. The younger Michael soon quit school and went into partnership with his father in the family business.

There's no farming without family among the Howrigans. William's children started at 5 or 6, hauling wood for the stove, feeding calves, scraping the barn, picking bugs off potato plants that yielded 300 bushels a year in the cold valley.

A big family also means constant companions—siblings to share chores, play baseball in the pasture or climb the maples on the hill. Most Howrigans grow up sociable, and the pleasures of sociability help make farming attractive.

''It's pretty magical. I have cousins and siblings that are my best friends,'' said Kate Howrigan Baldwin of Burlington, one of 12 children of Francis Howrigan. ''There's an allegiance that is unspoken. You know you are going to help one another and be there for one another. It's not a mandate—it's what you want to do.''

Family is the first thing Brendan Schreindorfer mentions when he is explaining how a village boy ended up buying his own milking herd at the age of 24. His mother is a Howrigan—William was his great-grandfather—but his parents did not farm.

Instead, Brendan spent his youth tagging along behind his grandfather, Robert, and his uncles and cousins on their big farm north of Fairfield Center.

He was determined to become a dairy farmer since he was a child, he said.

''I think it was the fact that everyone was always working together to get something done. People pull together and it pulls you along. It's a family thing, and it never leaves your system once it's there,'' he said.

Five years ago, his parents co-signed a note to help him buy his herd. This winter, he borrowed money on his own to purchase a 625-acre farm in Sheldon. (He'd built up equity, but the Howrigan pedigree might have helped him get the loan, he said.)

His new place was run down—his cousins helped him with repairs through the winter. He needed to move his herd this spring—a small squadron of Howrigans showed up with trucks and trailers to help.

Howrigans help one another bring in hay, harvest corn, fix equipment and build barns. Patrick Howrigan, 54, of Sheldon, raised the rafters of his 200-stall barn in a day, thanks to volunteers led by his brothers and cousins.

''A lot of neighbors helped, but family was the driving force,'' he said.

#### LOVE OF THE LAND

Harold Howrigan's air-conditioned pickup truck bounced down a dirt track through one of his fields last week, between rows of corn taller than the cab. He nodded toward a nearby woods. The landowner, he said, had subdivided the land and put in five or six houses.

There was the slightest hint of disappointment or disapproval in his tone. Since he bought his first farm in 1968, he has acquired more than 1,000 acres, a rolling green landscape of maple woods and productive fields with million-dollar views.

''I've never sold an inch of land. I just don't want to do that,'' he said.

If the Howrigan clan has a leader and role model, Harold, at 81, fills the bill. His square face is topped by a puff of white hair, his ruddy complexion crinkled by the weather. It's a face that would look equally at home in a Tipperary pub, a testament to his purely Irish ancestry.

Like many of the Howrigan men, he seems gruff and a bit standoffish at first meeting. Howrigans have the ''quiet gene,'' says his niece Kate Baldwin.

Over the kitchen table in the farmhouse he shares with his wife, Anne, or on a tour of the land they farm with their three sons, he expands. The gruffness melts into stories of childhood on the farm. He shows a visitor field after hillside field, not saying much, apparently for the pure pleasure of looking at the land and the results of a lifetime's work.

Land was ''a treasure,'' he said, to the Irish farmers who immigrated to Fairfield from a country where land ownership was all but impossible for them. That fierce allegiance to one's own acres also runs in the Howrigan line.

Even in the hardscrabble days of the Depression, his father treated the land well—planting trees, combing stones from the rocky fields, preventing erosion. ''He never cut a live maple,'' he said.

Harold and his sons use the latest technology in their sugarhouse, but they collect sap the way Harold's father did, with hanging buckets and sled-top tanks pulled by five teams of horses.

Horses don't require new roads to be cut and are easier on the land. ''There's no substitute for horses gathering sap. They're nicer to work with, they come to you and stop. A tractor won't do that,'' he said.

With the other farmers of Fairfield, the Howrigans have created a town perhaps more pastoral than any other in Vermont. From many of Howrigan's hillsides, the view of corn and hayfields and grazing heifers seems to have changed not at all in a hundred years.

But does he value his land for its worth in bushels of corn alone? Or does he find it beautiful, as well?

''I think it is beautiful, and I work to keep it that way,'' he said, looking back toward the home farm. ''I treasure it for its value as working land and for its beauty, too.''

## ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

### IN RECOGNITION OF DR. H. WESLEY TOWERS, JR.

● Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Dr. H. Wesley Towers Jr. upon his retirement as State Veterinarian after 37 years of dedicated service. He is a man with a kind heart, diverse interests and great abilities. Wesley embodies the best of Delaware.

''Doc,'' as he was fondly known, was born on August 15, 1942 in Wilmington, DE. He spent much of his youth with his grandfather, the farm manager on E.E. du Pont's Greenville, DE, estate, ''Dogwood.'' He loved the country, the farm work, and the animals. When the local veterinarian came to tend the livestock, Doc knew what he wanted to be.

Doc graduated high school in 1960 from P.S. Dupont, and went on to study animal and poultry science at the University of Delaware, graduating with honors and distinction in 1964. He spent the next four years at the University of Pennsylvania veterinary school, graduating in 1968, and went on to become Delaware's vet almost by chance.

After veterinary school, Doc took a job in Kent County as an apprentice to the State veterinarian. At the same time, Harrington and Georgetown racetracks offered him a temporary night job overseeing racehorses. Several weeks later, the track vet had a stroke, leaving him unable to resume race work. The temporary job became a full-time, second job for Doc. The following year in 1969, the State vet retired and Doc was appointed in his place.

Doc has the Nation's fourth largest poultry industry to protect, a rabies epidemic to police, and race courses to regulate. Containing and excluding contagious and infectious animal and poultry diseases is his priority, with public enemy No. 1 being avian flu, a virulent respiratory ailment that devastates poultry. Doc and his team work hard at their jobs to ensure that any outbreaks of avian flu are contained.

During his time as State vet, Doc has received the Department of Agriculture's Employee of the Year award, the University of Delaware's Worrilow Award for service to agriculture and Delaware's coveted Award for Excellence and Commitment to State Service. At the University of Delaware, Doc is a part of the Agricultural Alumni Association, the Alumni Association board, the Career Planning and Placement advisory committee, the phone-athons, and the ''Alumni in the Classroom'' program.

Doc spends much of his free time championing causes in which he believes. He testifies in SPCA cases, including revelations over local ''puppy mills.'' He is involved with the racing commissions, the State Fair Board and the Tri-State Bird Rescue group. In addition, Doc enjoys gardening, traveling, hunting, cooking and taking trips to the beach.

Doc is married to his college sweetheart, Sarah. The two met in a chemistry laboratory at the University of Delaware, and were married on June 25, 1966. They have two children, Laura and David, and four grandchildren, Mark, Annie, Matthew and Davey. Sarah describes her husband over almost forty years as a patient, kind and loving man who loves to be around people. He is fortunate to wake up every morning and go to a job that he loves.

After retirement, Doc plans to spend his time pursuing his hobbies, volunteering, and most importantly, continuing to raise his beloved Delaware blue hens. I rise today to honor Doc and to thank him for the friendship that we share. Through his tireless efforts, Doc has made a profound difference in the lives of thousands and enhanced the quality of life for an entire State. Upon his retirement, he will leave behind a legacy of commitment to public service for both his children and grandchildren and for the generations that will follow. I congratulate him on a truly remarkable and distinguished career. I wish him and his family only the very best in all that lies ahead for each of them.●

### THE VALUE OF RURAL HEALTH CARE

● Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I will take a few minutes to pay tribute to a group of people whose tireless, dedicated service to those in need too often goes unnoticed—North Dakota's and our Nation's health care providers. As I travel around North Dakota, I frequently stop in to visit hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. I am continually impressed by the quality, compassionate care that I see being provided by doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and other medical staff, as well as by the administrative and support staff.

Rural America depends on its small town hospitals, its tertiary hospitals, on physicians and nurses, nursing homes, those who provide emergency ambulance services, and many others to provide a seamless system of care. There are a range of challenges facing rural health systems, from difficulty recruiting and retaining staff and inadequate reimbursement to rising costs and reams of paperwork to fill out. Despite these challenges, our health care providers do an admirable job remaining focused on providing quality care.

Our hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics are also important engines driving North Dakota's economy. Health services account for 8 percent of North Dakota's gross State product. And health care providers are often among the largest employers in a rural community, representing about 15 percent of direct and secondary employment.

In short, a strong health care system is an important part of our rural infrastructure, and the people who make up that system have my deep respect and thanks. Over the years, we have determined that rural electric service, rural telephone service, an interstate highway system through rural areas, and rural mail delivery, to name a few services, make us a better, more unified nation. The same is true of rural health care, and I will continue fighting for policies that reflect rural health care as a strong national priority.●

### COMMENDING HOME DEPOT

● Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to the Home Depot for the support, employment, and assistance it provides to the men and women of our active duty Armed Forces, Reserves and National Guard and their families.

Beginning with its founding by Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank and continuing under CEO and President Bob Nardelli, the Home Depot has always been a great corporate citizen. Nothing